

Las Vegas: June 2009

I.

Translucent clouds rimmed with silent eyes of Alina, shine of sight, wind-blown and dust-coated her prisms of fingers graced the valley on a transparent day. Soft gold sheets of air overlapped in vast columns of air between heaven and this snowy dustplain where the desert's roaming white blankets lay threadbare.

Sleepless withering of mountains to sand; sagebrush valleys with hands on the sun. Whispering specters of water serenely roiling through layered canyons of sandstone. Tumbleweeds skip to a symphony of crickets. Rock walls like the face of God.

II.

The sound of an aero plane tore the sky open: its wake of mirror reflected nighttime neon tears, ferocious tournaments of torn concrete cathedrals, paradox parades intoxicated in the streets with a funeral band straining against its leash of gravity, nightgowns flying alongside flocks of pigeons, traffic and lights singing along with slot machines, galaxies of blinking lights and never-blinking eyes...

The mirror blew to dust as the comet passed away, and scattered along the back roads, caught in the graying hair and weathered rags of those crucified on telephone poles, those stirred to sermons by confessions streaming on wires above their heads, woven through thin air and teeth chattering on winter nights as prayers of saints well up through the horns of sun bleached cattle skulls. Crowns of cactus thorns surround a flower bulb. The tarot of the desert is all swords. Its ghosts are all ghosts.

III.

Coyotes gape at the sun as it explodes like a dropped plate—vultures peak from behind the remains—then it falls back together again.

“Sun dogs,” scowls the panting coyote, pawing with his eyes a vast rainbow halo like a lasso of desolation, and lowered it down on Nevada.

Souls stirred inside hollow horse hides that filled the plains with the rattle of bones and rose to the sky where their dreadful white manes spread out as clouds in that broad rainbow devil's mouth, and waited for night to rain.

IV.

And in the morning, in the mountains, me and Alina did awake, parched, next to dying embers and silent rising horizons of dusted rose and fire (though the night was no colder, I cannot bear the sight of a newly dead fire). Hung over and slung over each other and the backs of nude barren bodies, I rolled into her and combed through her hair with translucent fingers. “I think I feel rain on the wind today,” she said.

And the wind laughed with the gold arroyo grass.

Written in the Back of Wild Edible Plants of Mother Nature,

Rented from the Multnomah County Library: Portland, Oregon, January 2009

They'll call anything a rebel
that won't be beaten down
by a newspaper like a dog.

I write this
on LSD
in Forest Park.
It's snowing,
so beautifully. Somewhere bulldozers
roam. You, dear reader,
are somewhere now too, with me,
waiting with the other
hungry children of this blackened Eden
whose weary elders guide
a straw
gently as a feather
onto the back of the Great Camel
whose teeth are mountains,

whose dreams are bird songs,
whose blood is rivers, streams,
whose hairs are ancient dusty trees,
whose skin is the grasses, dirt and weeds,

and whose desperate breaths
are the wandering, weeping rains.

If You Happen To Find Mariette, Please, Wait To Read These
Words Until The Red Sun Swells Through Stained Glass

I.

Laying in liquor canals,
Mariette's wringing petals from torn
strips of storm.

II.

Swastika resting in light on my chest,
Mariette shades the window with flags
of the soil, of the soil,
of the earth, of our atmosphere's lashes
of sun, of afternoon.

III.

From our pale
Mariette's ankles stream ribbons of heat
this evening of waking,
as the sun sets, the waterline tackled by
slow constellations' orange orbs,
for our strippers eat dinner alone.

IV.

St. Elmo's fire crowning
Mariette's wind-thrown blond,
curled into herself
as the saints on our masts long swing lanterns
against the rain wrung from her gown. Mariette
and the storm both left staggering
into the harbor.

V.

Amber jagged against azure,
Marxist red, oceans of canyon,
Pacific and Atlantic one lulling
Thule, dried and dead. Mariette skips the glaciers
like stepping stone to Iceland, still loved
and still lovely, for she was already vast.
"In slow glimmer, the waves disappeared,
silhouette of the storm on my breast."
Mariette faints, and the quiet stays quiet
for a while.

VI.

Broken bones laid by the bridge.
Mariette laid erupting flame,
lighting his cocktail
with eyelashes, fingertips, slow as a lover
over caskets of islands of men,

dancing on the edge of a cliff
which cuts through the desert.

I blow rings of fire
to hail the sun,
and char black my skin.

The moon breathes rings of light
to make it young again, and yet
I wish it didn't.

I open the throats of nights
with sunrise whose rosy light
warms my arms.

I open the throats of days
with sunset whose death
shakes stars from my hair.

Cold sings the air,
filled with hordes of ghosts
of indiscriminate kisses

between trees and lips, breaths
of the ages, which tear out cities and break
the hearts of all things.

I whisper to seedlings
and say that it is spring, of course
I am lying to them.

I wrap a blanket 'round
my wildflower bones and laugh
as the snow melts.

My roots dry in muddy sand.
My petals blink their little eyes
but

blind
they become
gently

when they stare aloft so long.
(Then dreams of heaven shine
through darkness

as heaven stirs
their sleepy leaves.)

Morning Dreams February 15th

I.

On clear days I see rings of rainbow
wrapping 'round the heads of animals
crowning them like haloed angels,
crows and cows and ants and swallows,
the tips of pines, their every needle.
A few rings bloom huge in the sky,
twisting with its windy sighs.

II.

On afternoons my shadow stretches
so long it wraps around the planet
and brings me spices where I'm standing.
But just as I think that it's landing,
to whisper at my dreamy toes,
it lifts and glides through my breast's womb
and lassoes up the rising moon.

III.

On nights I wander through the city,
myriad lights like eyes all splitting
up my shadow, roaming pretty,
twelve directions, always getting
longer, shorter, darker, lighter,
as rainbow ribbons grace my hair:
the ghosts of those who would be there.

Wildflowers

Candles of tobacco
burn inside the vulture's mouth.
She swims through my iris

into the cave where she pecks
at the naked, sacred bones
of my ancestors. I am ten thousand

years old. I am ten thousand senses,

pale, whose hands had seen poetry
burned and in ash. Ash that today formed a
cloud, sent to reach Mariette's iris. Ash sent
between rising, towards setting bands.
Bands that peeled from the sky and flowed,
ribbons of setting, of rising, to celebrate
hands holding early glass bridges, and
wrap them, blanketing poetry burned.
Did you know, Mariette? The rivulets
of thawed starlight that stream
to your palms
only couldn't let the river die alone.

VII.

Hot orchard run,
Mariette in your roots, made of shattering spaces
of soil whose colors seep up through
branches to drip colors
of heat on the eyelashes, on the eyes
of lost barefoot beatifies caught under
leaves acting like snow, acting like souls
for spring. Their shadows weave words
on the ground as they rise, and they rise
for the words of their bodies. And their words
are spoken by glass sunlight like prisms
avoiding the dream, so I sleep,
yet they still project visions onto my sheets.
"It has something
to do with the view, I think."

VIII.

Armies lay their guns on the edge of the tide.
Mariette, come by night, wash these ruins of ash,
wash this rubble of form,
wash the city of dead.
Wash my fingertips, fires of sands, in hours.
Wash my hands in the kiss of this man, when
you come, who here kisses this picture
and lays his gun down in the earth,
into azure and mountains and distance
and birth.

IX.

Our fingertips met,
Mariette,
and we brought together our palms underground.
We made mountains
wove joy into the hair of all those we call
Lazarus, calling from this corner table to
dancers who mend their own hours on the edges
of azure and the windows of Thule
a while longer.

The Murder of Charon

I.

The Boatman's lover
waits by the window—
they lived by windows, and by signs of the day—

the language of windows
 when you feel like it reminds you
 of the last time you died—
or as shadows haul time across the room,
 peeling the wallpaper,
like silent fingers of the sun—

she waits for the babble of coins
 to sound down the street.

II.

Charon's lover had a lover once.
Dead boy of marvelous agony—
Pompii groaned like lava from his lovely eyes.
While combing his hair one night for a welcoming gala,
 chatting in Italian, he insulted the Boatman—
once. Found mouth steaming, skin blank, drowned,

 back upon the banks of the cruel earth.

III.

They summered in Hiroshima—no tornadoes
 or volcanoes or plagues to be found
 elsewhere that season.

Who does not need somewhere they can let down
 their hair and savor the brush
of hot ash on the wind? Lounging on ethereal
 lawn chairs,

sipping coffee, they watched charred bodies
 pick through the charcoal ruins and pull
the broken fingers of the buried
until the skin shed off.

She glanced over at him, the same gaze carved in his face
as when, at the airport, someone had asked them,
 “Are you here on business?”

Mountainface

Mountainface,
mountainhands:

 be-love'd, as I move my pen, the sun hardly moves
my arm-span. And with the slightest flicker of energy, you
 move mountains,
spirits.

The sun moves nowhere, really. It's our planet
spinning, dizzy and busy, but
 not
 us

dear mountain-face,
mountain-hands,
 erode away. New beauty each
 day

 Each
hour, minute, heart-beat, now, new now. . . .
 Your hands on my cheeks. You
wrinkle and un wrinkle them in no hurry,

mountainface
mountainhands.

Las Vegas, Nevada 2006

*Kiss the spout of your sink. Raise your hands
in prayer to the power lines.*

*Whisper love songs to the telephone receiver.
Together, all at once.
We are not alone...
listen.*

Today is not a normal day. Tonight is not
a normal night. Everything is alive.
The utilities are alive. Drains
and pipes and wires sew us
together like a quilt.

I wake.
My body's sore, questions scratch like talons
on my skull.

The cosmos thawed; trickled down on Las Vegas like so many shots of tequila,
liquid neon rivulets running beside the car. Where did we go? Did we stay? Who drove?

Were the lights from
the streetlights or the headlights or the Marlboro lights or the traffic lights
or the casinos?

And which, in the dark of the new moon desert, came upon
the hangman? And did I sit alone by the gallows
of a wilting Joshua tree,
every grain of sand a prophecy of me? Was I
alone?

The morning sun's an alarm clock I can't turn off.
My shoes are full of sand.

Faucet, prophet,
we were lost. How—late—did we find our way back to
the electric dew on the concrete web of utilities alive?

Early morning? Late night?
“Later still,” says the hangman
from the streetpole on Durango,
from deep under the sidewalk.

IV.

“Come for a swim?”
he asked her with eyes on his breakfast.

She skips across the backs of Heathens,
her feet all but numbing
in the slow black glacial waters—and dashes,
spinning and singing and shining
for the muddled masses mulling around the dock

if only for the sweet scent of long-
forgotten perfumes.

The intoxicating incense of pollen,
sweat and alcohol.

“I think that I'll stay here today,” she says,
looking away.

“See to the garden.”

V.

The garden in one place is a sandbank,
the shape left after a flood.
Another is littered with burned and bruised rubble.

Still another growls but mud,
like the rim of a geyser—
along the terrace wall—

all are watered by parched winds
scraping through desolate riverbeds.

It's not that nothing grows.
Blackbrush and belladonna seep through
the cracked land. Yet it remains bare,
for to Charon, everything is a weed.

The Gutters Cradle Mount Charleston: Las Vegas 2005

The gutters overflow
with shallow archives
of Mount Charleston's snow

into canyons of streets
growing old, growing
rivers upon rivers of gray
hair and fingernails and bones

that overflow past the vast thicket
of concrete, blinking neon
through nights and days to stare
on dawn and traffic

and pedestrians in rows,
who stagger like Jericho
under trumpets of streetlamps
whose blossoms serenaded
Mount Charleston's snow

as I am dragged by my hair
towards the boat by good citizens,
over gray sidewalk squares

with numbers in their corners,
whose holidays raise them
like stairways leading

to red blinking towers crowning
great gray stems in the thicket of buildings
where preaching beggars read off the names
of streets to coroners

who papier-mâché the walls of ballrooms
with magazines and zigzags,
dipping their heads into dreams brief and bright—

dreams as blond as lashes of afternoon sun,
lashes that come
into the side of my vision through emerald
leaves of afternoon as I stare up being dragged on my back.

Come, beams, into my vision and light
the fountain and square,
soak into my hair, and don't dare

reflect dreams of the good life
the glare and gleam of somewhere

off archives of Charleston snow
as it wanders into skylines
low, pushing up telephone poles,

coldly seeping into valleys and lakes
where boats glide and row
over clouds in the water,

tackled by constellations, slowly
revolving over the edge of the river bank
overflowing, where I walk quiet with my toes

kissing the brim of the waterline,
kissing the water where I walk contemplating
the sighs of stairwells and the rise
of waters and wells tomorrow morning. Oh morning,

when my hands are bound by hands,
when a bell's toll sings like sirens,
like rain's liquid bells to the railways it sings,

through bright eyed black buildings it sings, and
extinguishes visions of hell
with visions of stairwells and eons of sunrises.

Then only deserts and mountains remain
coated with blankets of snow.